

Topical Issues of Mass Media in the Globalizing Information Network

A Five Minute Comment by David Parry

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Introduction: Trivia and Dissent

My fear is that the press increasingly communicates in a one dimensional manner, no matter what language it speaks in. Put differently, it talks in the parlance of conjecture. Yet, there is an old saying in Great Britain claiming “assumptions” make an “ass” out of “you” and “me”, which may be why I find the very title of the topic under discussion on this round table problematic. It is not simply the philosophical fact that notions of the “topical” seem driven by a rampant ideological depersonalization sadly prevalent in our modern times, but that “globalizing” is itself held up as an unquestionable “good”, along with its quasi-demonic twin the “information network”. We are all human beings, undoubtedly, and access to raw data could be classed as a human Right, but boundaries and borders are equally important, particularly against the manufactured flow of Media generalization and the dangerous dismissal of informed dissent.

Ostensibly, the fields of Media, Entertainment, and Communication have never been more exciting. Additionally, the vigorous investment-opportunities in this area over the past three decades bear clear testimony to an unabated enthusiasm for technical development. Overall, such excitement is due to the alleged benefits of electronic innovations like Infobahn's, as well as new methods of digitalized transmission. Indeed, the working paper No. 179, 1994, (old news) of the Centre for Coordination Science at MIT describes the concept as follows: “The information superhighway directly connects millions of people, each both a consumer of information and a potential provider. Most predictions about commercial opportunities on the information superhighway focus on the provision of information products, such as video on demand, and on new sales outlets for physical products, as with home shopping. The information superhighway brings together millions of individuals who could exchange information with one another. Any conception of a traditional market for making beneficial exchanges, such as an agricultural market or trading pit, or any system where individuals respond to posted prices on a computer screen is woefully inadequate for the extremely large number of often complex trades that will be required.” However, even a cursory examination of these concerns quickly reveals inauthentic ideological assumptions. Do

we really, as individuals, need to barter in a twenty four hour feeding frenzy of theoretical gains, or pick up a date in the perpetual, unsleeping, purgatory of the sexually available? Is it actually a burning issue of the day to be informed about tax benefits gifted to a Manchester United Soccer player, the price of cheese in Beijing, or how many fist fights a Hollywood celebrity has had with prying paparazzi? Malcontented media bosses and info-junkies to one side, potential usage is an important factor in terms of environment sustainability, and in their nightmare world of broken machines only the affluent seem to benefit.

British Theatre, curiously, is an instructive reminder of quality over quantity. Not merely a diversion from the dreary realities of our workaday lives, unlike so many democratizing Apps, televisual entertainments, pushbike exchanges, or consciously narcotizing podcasts. It explores Beauty, both great and small: in itself, an act of information-dissent. Traditionally, standing against the type of collectivization placing facticity above all, along with embodying an opposition to the decrementing and cynical way commerce inculcates issue-priorities it refuses to surrender idea-rich content to reductively manageable bytes. And as such, Theatre reminds us all that knowledge is not only information, but a superior, intrinsically unique, source of human freedom, along with the enlightening realization that facts never equate with truth; a very poor equation in qualitative human cognition.